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CONFLICT IN BLACK MALE/FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Debra Colleen Taylor
Marilyn Renee McClain

1997


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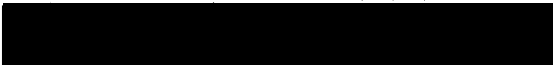
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ABSTRACT

Conflict in Black male/female relationships is characterized by what some indicate as a lack of communication, mistrust and a general lack of understanding between the sexes. The Black male/female relationship has not only had to endure pressures resulting from gender differences within the relationship, but they have also had to deal with race, class, and economic discrimination from society. Black women have suffered the same discrimination as Black men, but in addition, have suffered gender discrimination as well. Educating Black men and women about their oppression, and the negative effect it has upon their relationships is the focus of this study. A critical theory paradigm approach provides the framework to examine the question, "How can Black men and women become empowered to have healthier relationships?" By providing an educational intervention that imparts historical information regarding the effects of oppression upon Black male/female relationships, the researchers believe that Black men and women can become empowered to build healthier relationships.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, women have been considered second class citizens and a vulnerable group in society. Based on gender and class, women have been oppressed socially, politically, economically and religiously. African American men and women have suffered class and race discrimination, and African American women have suffered gender discrimination as well. The problem is that discrimination of African American men and women has affected their ability to develop intimate relationships with each other. Anderson and Mealy (1979) state, "It is clear that the animosity between Black men and women as a group did not stem from early slavery" (p.42). They indicate that it is capitalism, born out of slavery that created conflict in these relationships. With the exchange of capital necessary to purchase slaves it became a necessity to split families. Families became less stable and it was many times futile for slave men and women to pledge commitment in their relationships.

From historical perspective, it can be shown that Black slave women provided a large portion of the labor force for the basic colonial economy. While the colonial ethic provided that "true womanhood" meant, being subservient as a

wife and laborer in the home economy, the social policy dictated that black slaves could never ascribe to "true womanhood". Black female slaves were not allowed to freely marry while enslaved, and they were enslaved for life. They were the most vulnerable group of the entire colonial society according to the established ideology of women's roles. Black males, however, at the beginning of slavery outnumbered Black women and were initially encouraged to marry White women in order to increase the slaves as capital (Staples, 1971).

Black women were very often forced to breed with Black male slaves to reproduce offspring for labor. Black women were subjected to the hatred and fury of White women who were opposed to the attention and sexual relations lauded upon them by their husbands as masters and other White males. Abramovitz (1988) reports that there were constant threats of sexual assault from slave masters and overseers upon women slaves. King (1988) indicates that, Angela Davis notes in *Women, Race and Class*, "If the most violent punishments of men consisted in floggings and mutilations, women were flogged and mutilated, as well as raped" (p.47).

The pre-civil war period in history from 1777-1860, marked the period of capitalism, industrialization and expansionism. Anderson and Mealy (1979) posit that

animosity between Black men and women did not stem from early slavery, but this animosity came with the rise of monopoly capitalism which began with reconstruction through the mass migration period (roughly 1865 - 1900). Black family life was shaped by slaves who were determined to live together. However, Staples (1971) depicts the only crucial role of the Black man as that of siring the children. Anderson and Mealy (1979) further indicate that because Blacks were not afforded the same capitalist freedom as White Americans, a breakdown of intimacy between Black men and women began to occur. Many believe that this breakdown occurred, because of the inability of Black men to economically provide for their families. As a result, Black men saw themselves as failures, leaving the family building role to Black women.

According to Anderson and Mealy (1979) the Garvey, Muslim and Nationalist movements dictated that Black women surrender leadership to their men, as they subjectively perceived this as encouraging a coming together and unifying of the family. This epoch appears to have marked the beginning of gender oppression by Black men toward Black women. According to Day (1997) class oppression by White men toward Black female slaves already existed, in that they

bred with them and even sold their own children into slavery.

Day (1997) notes that slave prices increased, especially for females due to their ability to produce labor. For Black women, their womanhood was inextricably entangled with their status as slaves. Black slave women had to maintain a strong drive for survival in a society that did not view them as in control of any facet of their lives, be it their husbands', children, or even their own life (Ryan, 1983).

The women's movement, during the period of Social Reform in the late nineteenth century, had at the forefront two major issues--abolition of slavery and suffrage. Although there was a tremendous women's movement in the 1800's, Black women's needs were not responded to by most White women dominated private charities, despite the high rates of poverty among Blacks (Abramovitz, 1988).

The Civil War brought an end to slavery in 1865. Blacks were free in theory, but in practice they were still in bondage by the effects of institutionalized racism. Abramovitz (1988) states, "...the White dominated charitable societies did little to help Blacks secure their social, political or economic rights, or otherwise address their

needs" (p.154). "African-American women's clubs supported the new class of working women by giving them places to live, a community of safety, and emotional and spiritual help" (Day, 1997, p. 213). However, Black women, more than any other group suffered class discrimination and were used as a source of the cheapest labor supply. They were paid meager wages and were the economic strand which held families together (Anderson & Mealy, 1979).

After eighty years of social reform activity, women were legally granted the right to vote by the Nineteenth Amendment, ratified in 1920. There were countless women and men who worked tirelessly for this significant cause of equality. A good number of Black women for example, Ida B. Wells, can also be credited with devoted and selfless effort to champion the women's movement for suffrage. Another heroine was Mary Church Terrell, who as one of the earliest College educated American Black women said, "a White woman has only one handicap to overcome--a great one, true her sex; a colored woman faces two--her sex and her race. A colored man has only one--that of race" (Jones, 1990, p. 3).

Black women throughout the history of America have found themselves marginal to both the movements for women's liberation and Black liberation, irrespective of their

victimization under the dual discriminations of racism and sexism (King, 1988). Although marginal to both struggles, many Black women have claimed that their racial identity is more salient than that of either gender, or class, for that matter. Diane Lewis, an anthropologist, has remarked that when racism is seen as the principle cause of womens subordinate status, "...their interest as Blacks have taken precedence over their interest as women" (King, 1988, p. 53.). "In the case of black men, their subordination as a racial minority has more than cancelled out their advantages as males in the larger society" (Staples, 1978, p. 169).

In 1972, Frances Beale, a founding member of the Women's Liberation Committee of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), introduced the phrase "double jeopardy" to describe the dual discrimination of racism and sexism that subjugate Black women (King, 1988). She further points out that scholars have conceptualized that there is indeed triple jeopardy for Black women, in that they suffer economic class oppression, as well as sexism and racism (King, 1988). But King herself suggests that there is 'multiple jeopardy' within the politics of liberation and she indicates that this concept is more complex than the simplistic notion that one type of oppression dominates over

another type. She states, "*In Liberating Theory*, monism is described as a political claim, 'that one particular domination precipitates all really important oppressions'" (1988, p.51).

In the early feminist movements, Black women experienced racism within the organizations which tended to serve the agenda of White middle and upper-class women. The issues and concerns of classism and racism germane to the plight of Black women were not issues that many of the White women suffragists were willing to champion as major edicts of their cause. King (1988) points out that the racism present in the early women's movement is apparent, even today and declares that, "when present at all, women of color are underrepresented and have marginal and subordinate roles" (p. 59).

Black women's grass-roots organizations emerged as a response to gender and civil inequality, and even in opposition to the oppression of Black males of the Civil Rights Movement. According to Hunter & Davis (1990), during the Civil Rights era of the 1960's, the Black Power movement seemed to change the widely held image of the emasculated and shuffling Black male dictated by racial caste.

A major problem today is that conflict in Black male/female relationships has broken down their ability to

share intimacy. Intimacy is defined here as, a close personal association. "Succinctly, by and large, most Black male and Black female authors writing on the subject seem to agree that many black male/female relationships today are destructive and potentially explosive. What they do not agree on, however, are the causes of the problems existing between Black men and Black women" (Franklin, 1984, p. 142). Historically, a pattern of conflict in Black male/female relationships existed. There are a number of viewpoints postulating possible causation of this breakdown in relationships. Bell, Bouie & Baldwin's viewpoint (1990), indicates that African Americans have adopted a Euro-American worldview and cultural orientation of heterosexual relationships. Consistent with this world view are the values of power, competition, material affluence, and physical gratification. This worldview emphasizes male domination; female subordination; material accumulation; physical characteristics; and sexual gratification. The African American worldview differs from the Euro-American worldview in that it is rooted in the historical, cultural, and philosophical tradition of African people which emphasizes oneness with nature and survival of the group (Bell, et al., 1990).

Daly (1995) states, "The Africentric paradigm proposes that in African culture humanity is viewed as a collective rather than as individuals and that this collective view is expressed as shared concern and responsibility for the well-being of others" (p.241). Several authors propose that the conflict in Black heterosexual relationships is largely due to African Americans accepting an orientation to social relationships, which is more consistent in many respects with Eurocentric cultural definitions than with their own (Bell, et al. 1990; Schiele, 1996; Asante, 1989).

Another such view for the cause of conflict in Black male/female relationships as discussed by Franklin (1984) is that they internalize sex-role definitions that are non complimentary. He further shares that contradictory messages are received by both genders during early socialization. For example, Black females are given messages such as, "because you will be a black woman, it is imperative that you learn to take care of yourself, because it is hard to find a black man who will take care of you" (p. 143). This message is contradictory to another message frequently received by Black females, which says, "your ultimate achievement will occur when you have snared a Black man who will take care of you." Comparatively, conflicting

messages received by young Black males says, "to become a man means that you must become dominant, aggressive, decisive, responsible, and, in some instances, violent in social encounters with others" (Franklin, 1984, p. 145-146). This directly contradicts the message, "You are Black and you must not be too aggressive, too dominant, and so on, because the man will cut you down" (Franklin, 1984, p. 146). It is clear based on this view, that the enactment of these sex roles would create confusing and conflicting messages incongruent with harmonious, intimate relationships.

Overall, there seems to be a consensus about the existence of conflict between Black males and Black females. It is the viewpoint of these writers that a major problem in Black male/female relationships is largely attributed to race, class and gender discrimination. This discrimination of Blacks has affected their role identity and self-esteem which impede their ability to establish and maintain intimate and/or healthy relationships.

Specifically, this study will address how Blacks who have been oppressed by race, gender, and class discrimination can be empowered to build healthier, intimate relationships. Also, the study will provide social workers with the tools necessary to help Blacks gain insight into

the significance of oppression as it relates to their inability to share intimacy in relationships.

"Empowerment theory is based on a conflict model that assumes that a society consists of separate groups possessing different levels of power and control over resources" (Gutierrez, 1990, p. 150). The significance of this problem in social work practice is the need for a better understanding of 'empowerment', which is defined as a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations (Gutierrez, 1990). Gutierrez (1990) further states that, "Women of color--black, Latina, Asian American and Native American--constitute a large proportion of social work caseloads" (p. 149). When viewing the inequities and social conditions that afflict many African American men, there appears to be a discomfoting silence from the social work profession (Allen-Meares & Burman, 1995). Therefore, this research is aimed at facilitating social work practitioners in providing useful interventions to empower Black men and women to take action to improve their relationships.

Problem Focus

As reported by Gutierrez (1990), "Women of color experience the 'double jeopardy' of racism and sexism in

U.S. society. They are hampered by average earnings that are lower than those of White women, by overrepresentation in low status occupations, and by an average low level of education" (p. 149). Comparably, Madhubuti (1990) states, "Black men in U.S. society are virtually powerless, landless and moneyless in a land where white manhood is measured by such acquisitions" (p. 61).

Woman who are in seemingly powerless situations are not taught how to gain power, but more so how to accept their powerlessness and work with or cope with their situations, rather than to change them. Black women must deal with the fact that their multiple oppressions have created conflictual messages that are not conducive to harmonious relationships with Black men. Madhubuti states, "Black men in relationship to Black women cannot, a great majority of the time, deliver the 'American dream'. Therefore, the dream is often translated into a Black male/female relationship nightmare where Black men, acting out of frustration and ignorance, adopt attitudes that are not productive or progressive in relationship to Black women" (p. 61).

Based on a review and synthesis of the literature, it is the conclusion of these researchers that there is a need

to bring to the consciousness of Black men and women, the unhealthy messages that are received through race, gender and class discrimination, and their effect upon Black male/female relationships.

Critical theory is the paradigm used in this study. The ideology of the study is based on the history of oppression of Blacks. These researchers have chosen the critical theory paradigm as appropriate because of the power imbalance that has existed between Blacks and Whites since slavery. The paradigm is oriented toward action to empower the oppressed and to bring about balance in the society.

The major social work practice arena of this study is direct practice. By educating and equipping practitioners with effective interventions, Black people can be empowered to make positive changes in their relationships.

METHODS

Purpose and Design

The purpose of this descriptive study is to provide Black men and women with knowledge and insight on the results of race, gender, and class oppression and their effect upon Black male/female relationships. A review of the literature indicates that a significant number of Black male/female relationships have experienced conflict which has had a negative impact on the deterioration of the Black family (Anderson & Mealy, 1979; Staples, 1978; Abramovitz, 1988; Day, 1997). Economic pressures, inability to commit, lack of communication and a general lack of understanding of the causes of the conflict have made it difficult to establish and maintain intimacy in Black male/female relationships.

This present study assessed with a pre-test the current knowledge of Black men and women as it relates to their history of race, class and gender oppression. After the pre-test, a video tape titled, "Black Male/Female Relationships", by Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu (1989) was used to describe conflict in these relationships. The video taped presentation conducted by Dr. Kunjufu, was of a seminar attended by Black male and female participants. Dr. Kunjufu

discussed with the group the history of oppression and various concepts as they relate to the conflict in Black male/female relationships. A post-test was given after the intervention of the video tape, to find out if the participants showed an increase in insight. The objective of this study is to provide insight into how oppression has impacted Black male/female relationships and to help social workers empower Black males and females to take action to build healthier relationships.

Guba (1990) states, "critical theory should be more appropriately labeled, ideological oriented inquiry" (p. 23). Critical theory is based on an ideology of oppression. It is the belief of these researchers that the deterioration of Black male/female relationships is related to race, gender and class oppression by the dominant White society. While a critical theory ideological orientation has been chosen to describe the historical implications of the oppression of Blacks, a post-positivist design is used in this study.

A major element of the critical theory paradigm asks, what action can be taken to empower oppressed people (Guba, 1988). Critical theorists answer this question by including the voice of the oppressed to help determine how best to

empower them. King (1988) states, "A black feminist ideology, first and foremost, thus declares the visibility of black women.... Second, black feminism asserts self-determination as essential. Black women are empowered with the right to interpret our reality and define our objectives" (p. 72). According to Hunter & Davis (1994), Black men want to be empowered with the right to define themselves within or beyond conventional notions of masculinity and manhood. "Further, what Black men are and what they should be is measured against the status and privilege of White males" (p. 20).

This study addressed the research question: How can Black males and females who have been oppressed by race, class and gender discrimination be empowered to build healthier, intimate relationships? It is these researchers' hypothesis that by providing various interventions to increase their knowledge of the history of oppression, insight will be gained to help empower Black males and females to build healthier, intimate relationships.

This study approached the ideological oriented inquiry based on a pre-test, and intervention, and a post-test (ABA), one group design. The majority of the 36 pre-test questions are rated on a Likert Scale and designed to

measure the participant's knowledge of conflict in Black male/female relationships. A video tape was shown after the pre-test as an educational intervention. The post-test administered is the same as the pre-test. It is these researchers' ideology that the multiple oppressions of Black people are directly correlated to conflicts in their relationships. Thus, the research project is best suited to the critical theory paradigm.

Sampling

The sample in this study consist of 13 Black males and 19 Black females, with two participants who did not respond to the gender questions. Davis (1986) states, "After a wealth of literature on androgyny and merging sex roles, there has recently been a noticeable, albeit small, move toward acknowledging that there are some essential differences in the way women and men perceive the world in which they live, resolve the dilemmas of daily living, and relate to others" (p. 33). It is important to include the voice of the Black males as well as the Black females, as oppression directly affects both gender. The study utilized a non probability sampling procedure, described by Rubin & Babbie (1993) as a purposive sample. This sample was selected because the participants were accessible and

representative of the population under study. In keeping with critical theory ideology, the participants were the voice of the oppressed. The participants were invited to the researchers' home to take the pre-test, receive an intervention, and take the post-test. A dinner was provided as an incentive for participation.

One threat to internal validity was testing. The process of testing itself can enhance performance on a test, rather than the intervention effecting the change. The chances of participants being able to research answers is minimal, as the pre-test and post-test are administered in one shot. Another threat to internal validity was selection bias. Some participants may be more motivated and interested in this study, therefore, giving more attention and effort to the process than those who may have other motives for participating (Rubin & Babbie, 1993).

Data Collection and Instruments

Data for this study was collected by the use of a one-shot pre-test and post-test questionnaire. This survey basically consisted of many questions rated on a Likert Scale, which measured the attitudes and knowledge of the participants as related to the history of oppression of Black people and conflict in Black male/female relationships

(see Questionnaire in Appendix A). A section exists at the end of the questionnaire which allows for qualitative data input by the participants. The concepts were measured by assigning and rating a quantitative value to participant's responses. The pre-test survey instrument measured the participant's knowledge and attitude of the history of oppression of Black people, Also measured was the degree of conflict in Black male/female relationships. The same questionnaire was administered as a post-test to measure knowledge and attitude after the intervention of a video tape on Black male/female relationships was shown. The researchers designed a questionnaire specifically for this research project. A pilot questionnaire was developed and administered to ten individuals to clarify and refine the questions. Suggestions from the participants in the pilot were incorporated into the final questionnaire. The final questionnaire included some actions that can be taken to educate and thereby empower Black men and women. A list of these actions include: A video of the causes of conflict in Black male/female relationships; a communications workshop; and couples therapy. The participants were requested to rate each intervention as to what they thought was effective. However, for purposes of this study a video tape

of the causes of conflict in Black male/female relationships was used as the intervention. Comments were also elicited from two open ended questions as a means to give a voice to the participants.

There are several strengths of this one-shot, written group questionnaire. For example, it minimizes the possibilities of misunderstanding, and allows for clarification of information at the time administration of the questionnaire. It is cost effective to survey many people at one time. A group questionnaire also avoids interviewer bias. It puts less pressure on participants to respond. Additionally, participants are provided a greater feeling of anonymity. Lastly, a one-shot group questionnaire is likely to yield a higher response rate.

The major weaknesses of this one-shot, written group questionnaire is selection bias, as the participants were a convenience sample. Also, it is a possibility that less quality information was obtained by not conducting face-to-face interviews.

Procedure

The data were gathered during a one-shot pre-test and post-test group design in the home of the researchers. The researchers compiled a list of friends, family, and

acquaintances who met the criteria of Black male and Black female adults. Every effort was made to include statistical variation across the convenience sample, with regard to age, income, education and marital status. Personal invitations were sent to 40 prospective participants. As an incentive, all participants were invited to stay for dinner immediately following completion of the survey. A "Respond S'il Vous Plait (RSVP)" was requested to ensure an adequate number of participants for the study. The instrument was administered, monitored, and collected by the researchers. The researchers also provided written and oral instructions to the participants and provided clarification as needed. The pre-test and post-test took approximately 30 minutes each to complete. The intervention took approximately 1 hour to complete.

RESULTS

The results of this study are from the responses of 34 participants. There were 13 males (40.6%) and 19 females (59.4%) who responded to the question on gender. Two participants did not respond to this question (see table 1).

Of the participants, 34 responded to the question on age. Their ages ranged from 21 to 60 years. The average age of the group of participants ranged between 41 - 50 years of age. Two participants (5.9%) were 21 to 30 years of age. Eleven participants (32.4%) were 31 to 40 years of age. Fifteen participants (44.1%) were 41 to 50 years of age. The remaining six participants (17.7%) were 51 to 60 year of age (see Table 2).

There was an equal number of participants who were married and divorced. Twelve participants (35.3%) responded to the category of married, and twelve participants (35.3%) responded to the category of divorced. The number of single participants were eight (23.5%), and two of the participants (5.9%) were separated (see table 3).

The vast majority of participants (97.%) were employed. One participant (3%) was unemployed and one participant did not respond to this question. The number reporting under \$25,000 annual income was six (18.8%) participants. Twelve

(37.5%) participants reported \$25,001 to \$40,000 annually. Eleven (34.3%) participants reported \$40,001 to \$60,000 annually, and three (9.4%) reported over \$60,000 annually (see Table 4).

Educational levels reported by the participants included four (11.8%) had high school/GED equivalent. Nine (26.5%) participants reported up to two years of college. Seventeen (50%) participants reported at least four years of college. Three (8.8%) participants reported obtaining a masters' degree, and one (2.9%) participant had obtained a doctorate degree (see Table 5).

The majority of participants (64.7%) indicated they were Protestants. One participant (2.9%) was Catholic. One participant (2.9%) was Islamic. Eight (23.5%) participants indicated they were of other religion and two (5.9%) participants indicated they had no organized religious affiliation (see table 6).

This study used a pre-test and post-test questionnaire which was rated on a Likert Scale. For the purpose of reporting the results the categories of strongly agree and agree were combined under one category of agree. Also, the categories of strongly disagree and disagree were combined under one category of disagree (see conversion Scale,

Appendix B). The areas of the questionnaire mainly addressed race, class/economics and gender discrimination as related to Black male/female relationships. Two open-ended questions were provided for participants to give comments and input as to their feelings and opinions relating to ways to improve relationships.

Questions 10(a), 11(a), 12(a) and 30(b) dealt with the issue of race. In question 10(a), the majority of the participants (29) agreed, that Black women have suffered discrimination just as much as Black men in the area of race. After the intervention, 28 participants agreed. Question 11 (a) of the pre-test showed an equal number of the participants (16) agreed, and disagreed that Black men have been guilty of discriminating against Black women in the area of race. On the post-test, a similar number of participants (15) agreed and (14) disagreed to this question. Also, in question 12 (a) of the pre-test, an equal number (15) of the participants agreed, and disagreed that conflict in Black male/female relationships are heavily impacted by racism. After the intervention a significant increase of participants (27) agreed to this question. In question 30 (b), the majority of participants (22) agreed that the greater material success of Black men, the more

they marry outside of their race. On the post-test, the majority of the participants (25) agreed (see Table 7).

The issue of class/economics was addressed in questions 10(b), 11(b), 12(b), 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, and 30(a). In question 10(b), the majority of the participants (26) agreed, Black women have suffered discrimination just as much as Black men in the area of class/economics. After the intervention a majority of the participants (25) agreed to this question. Question 11(b) which stated, Black men have been guilty of discriminating against Black women in the area of class/economics, 12 participants agreed. After the intervention, 22 of the participants agreed. Question 12(b) of the pre-test which stated, conflict in Black male/female relationships are heavily impacted by class/economics, the greater number of participants (24) agreed. After the intervention, 31 of the participants agreed. Question 13 which states, the buying and selling of slaves has little to do with conflict in Black male/female relationships, showed less than one-third of the participants (10) agreed. Subsequent to the intervention, 18 participants agreed to this question. It was found in Question 14 which states, Black women think that Black men have been financially responsible for their families, eight

participants agreed. Similarly, eight of the participants agreed after the intervention. Question 15 states, Black women do not have a problem marrying Black men who make less money than they do. The majority of participants (19) agreed to this question. After the intervention, 18 participants agreed to this question. Question 16 states, Black men who spend money on Black women feel a sense of ownership of the women. The findings show 16 participants agreed to this question. A significant increase of participants (28) agreed to this question after the intervention. Question 17 states, it is assumed that Black women are more materially successful than Black men. Of the participants 19 agreed. After the intervention 27 participants agreed to this question. In question 18, a Black man's self-worth is related to how much money he makes, the majority of participants (20) agreed. In comparison, 26 of the participants agreed after the intervention. Question 19 which states, a Black woman's self-worth is related to how much money she makes showed five participants agreeing to this question. The findings showed that 11 participants agreed to this question after the intervention. Question 22 states, Black men making more money than Black women causes conflict in relationships

Seven participants agreed to this question. Similarly, after the intervention, nine participants agreed. Question 30(a) states, the greater material success of Black men, the more respect they have from Black women. Of the participants, 13 agreed to this question. After the intervention 20 participants agreed (see Table 8).

Questions 10(c), 11(c), 20 and 27 related to the gender issue. Question 10 which states, Black women have suffered discrimination just as much as Black men in the area of gender, the majority of participants (27) agreed. After the intervention, 23 of the participants agreed to this question. In question 11(c), 16 participants agreed that Black men have been guilty of discriminating against Black woman in the area of gender. After the intervention 17 participants agreed. Question 20 states, it is easier for a Black woman to get a good job, than it is for a Black man. Twenty-four participants agreed. After the intervention findings showed 26 participants agreed. In question 27, 17 of the participants agreed with the question, one reason for the conflict in Black male/female relationships is the European (white) cultural idea of male domination. After the intervention a significant increase (25) participants agreed to this question (see Table 9).

This study also addressed the attitude of Black men and women toward each other in questions 21, 25, 26, 28 and 29. In question 21, 24 participants agreed, to the question which states, generally Black women have respect for Black men. Similarly, after the intervention, 22 participants agreed. Question 25 states, most of the Black men have no idea how Black women feel about them. Thirteen participants agreed to this question. After the intervention, a marked increase of participants (23) agreed. Further findings showed on question 26 which states, most of the time Black women have no idea how Black men feel about them, 13 participants agreed. After the intervention, 23 participants agreed. Question 28 states, Black men trust Black women. Seventeen participants agreed to this question. After the intervention, 13 of the participants agreed. Question 29, states Black women trust Black men. Six participants agreed to this question. After the intervention five participants agreed.

The greatest significant change occurred in non-categorized question 23 which states, that Black women loose more males to Black gay relationships, than to interracial relationships. Responses showed only three participants agreed. After the intervention a significant number of participants (20) agreed (see table 10).

Participants were asked about various interventions that could help to improve Black male/female relationships. In question 34(a) which states, a good way to improve Black male/female relationships is a communications workshop, a majority of the participants (28) agreed. After the intervention, 31 participants agreed to this question. Question 34(b) states, couples therapy is a good way to improve Black male/female relationships. Twenty seven participants agreed. After the intervention, findings revealed 31 participants agreed. In question 34(c), participants were asked about the use of a video describing the causes of conflict in Black male/female relationships, as a good way to improve these relationships. Nineteen of the participants agreed. Subsequent to the intervention 27 participants agreed. Of the three interventions mentioned above, the most significant increase in the number of participants who agreed was from those who responded, a good way to improve Black male/female relationships is through the use of a video. The specific intervention used in this study was a video tape describing the causes of conflict in Black male/female relationships (see Table 11).

DISCUSSION

In all relationships there are many factors that may cause conflict. Some factors such as a lack of communication, unemployment, educational preparation, and a need for autonomy can be considered issues that cross racial lines. However, in this research project the components of race, class/economics and gender discrimination, are issues that tend to plague Black male/female relationships.

The foundation of this research postulates that the history of oppression of Blacks has greatly contributed to conflict in Black male/female relationships. Blacks have assimilated and adopted European values and norms which are largely based on material gain for success. Yet, due to societal oppression, Blacks have had a disproportionate rate of discrimination causing an overall lack of opportunity to obtain the "American Dream". Due to this lack of opportunity, frustration and conflict have insidiously permeated these relationships.

The significant results of this study indicate that the majority of participants surveyed agreed that race, class/economics and gender discrimination have negatively impacted Black male/female relationships. More significantly, after the educational intervention an

increased number of participants agree that these oppressions have a negative impact on relationships.

These results validate the researchers hypothesis that, by providing an intervention to increase Black males and females knowledge of historical oppression, insight can be gained to help empower them to build healthier, intimate relationships. More specifically, there was a significant increase in the number of participants who agreed that conflict in Black male/female relationships is heavily impacted by racism. Also, it was found that class/economics is an issue of conflict in relationships. This is evidenced by a significant increase of participants who agreed after the intervention that Black men who spend money on Black women feel a sense of ownership of the women. Further findings indicate that gender discrimination has effected the harmony in Black male/female relationships. After the intervention, a significant increase of participants agreed that one reason for conflict in Black male/female relationships is the European (white) cultural idea of male domination. This concept of Eurocentrism was also validated by the literature review (Bell et al, 1990; Schiele, 1996; Asante, 1989).

The respondents were given an opportunity to express

their feelings in regard to the questions asked, and give recommendations of other ways to improve Black male/female relationships. The majority of the responses received expressed that the participants believed better communication is a way to improve these relationships. Many people believed that putting God in one's life can lead to healthier relationships. Other ways to improve Black male/female relationships mentioned by the participants include respect, honesty and a commitment to one another.

In view of the psychosocial negative ramifications of institutionalized discrimination, it is no wonder that Black individuals suffer inner conflicts in their relationships. The participant sample, representative of the oppressed group being studied validated these researcher's beliefs of the effects of discrimination on Black male/female relationships.

Additionally, the results support the literature review and provide an answer to the research an answer to the research question, "How can Black males/females who have been oppressed by race, class/economics and gender discrimination be empowered to build healthier, intimate relationships?" The above findings indicate that after the educational intervention, the majority of participants

agreed that racial discrimination is a contributing factor in the conflict experienced in Black male/female relationships. These findings also indicate that the factors of class/economics adversely impact the way Black males and females relate to each other. They further show that factors of gender heavily effect Black male/female relationships in a conflictual manner. Additional, the results indicate the use of a video tape as an educational intervention influenced the responses of the participants in a way that confirms the above findings.

It should be noted that there are limitations of this study. The demographics of the participant sample is highly representative of the average middle class population, rather than lower and upper class populations. Another limitation is that the study surveyed a majority of female participants.

Implications

The implications for social workers who counsel Black men and women on relationship issues is that they consider the history of race, class and gender oppression as it relates to conflict in these relationships. It should be noted that the majority of the participants indicate that the use of video tape describing the conflict in Black

male/female relationships is an effective tool in working with problems in these relationships.

It is recommended that this study be replicated to include a group of participants representative of a more diverse population. Obtaining a balance between the genders is important. Also, variance of age and educational level would give a greater voice to the oppressed in enhancing healthier more intimate Black male/female relationships.

APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the general information section below.
Write all of your responses on the form.

1. Identification Number ____ 2. Female ____ Male ____

3. Age

21 - 25 ____	41 - 45 ____
26 - 30 ____	46 - 50 ____
31 - 35 ____	51 - 55 ____
36 - 40 ____	56 - 60 ____

4. Marital Status (Please check one) 5. Your Annual Income

Married ____	Single ____	Separated ____	Under \$15,000 ____
Divorced ____	Widowed ____		\$15,001-\$25,000 ____
			\$25,001-\$40,000 ____
			\$40,001-\$60,000 ____
			\$60,001 or above ____

6. Employed Yes ____ No ____

7. Source of Your Income (check all that apply)

Private Business ____ Government Assistance ____
Self Employed ____ Public Employment ____ No Income ____
Other _____

8. Education Level

Less than High School ____	Some High School ____
High School/GED ____	Some College ____
2 years College ____	4 years College ____
Masters Degree ____	Doctorate Degree ____

9. Religion

Protestant ____ Catholic ____ Jewish ____ Muslim ____
Other (Specify) _____ No Religion ____
No Organized Religion ____

Please rate your feelings about each statement below by checking the appropriate box, based on the following scale:

Strongly Disagree = SD
 Disagree = D
 Not Sure = NS
 Agree = A
 Strongly Agree = SA

SD D NS A SA

10. Black women have suffered discrimination just as much as Black men in the areas of:
 (rate all below)

a. race. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 b. class/economics. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 c. gender. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

11. Black men have been guilty of discriminating against Black women in the areas of:
 (rate all below)

a. race. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 b. class/economics. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 c. gender. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

12. Conflict in Black male/female relationships are heavily impacted by:
 (rate all Below)

a. racism. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 b. class/economics. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

13. The buying and selling of slaves has little to do with conflict in Black male/female relationships.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

14. Black women think that Black men have been financially responsible for their families.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

15. Black women do not have a problem marrying Black men who make less money than they do.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

	SD	D	NS	A	SA
16. Black men who spend money on Black women feel a sense of ownership of the women.	()	()	()	()	()
17. It is assumed that Black women are more materially successful than Black men.	()	()	()	()	()
18. A Black man's self-worth is related to how much money he makes.	()	()	()	()	()
19. A Black woman's self-worth is related to how much money she makes.	()	()	()	()	()
20. It is easier for a Black women to get a good job, than it is for a Black man.	()	()	()	()	()
21. Generally, Black women have respect for Black men.	()	()	()	()	()
22. Black men making more money than Black women causes conflict in relationships.	()	()	()	()	()
23. Black women lose more males to Black gay relationships than to interracial relationships.	()	()	()	()	()
24. Black men and women should form their identity from their relationships.	()	()	()	()	()
25. Most of the time Black men have no idea bow Black women feel about them.	()	()	()	()	()
26. Most of the time Black women have no idea how Black men feel about them.	()	()	()	()	()
27. One reason for conflict in Black male/female relationships is the European (White) culture idea of male domination.	()	()	()	()	()
28. Black men trust Black women.	()	()	()	()	()
29. Black women trust Black men.	()	()	()	()	()

	SD	D	NS	A	SA
30. The greater material success of Black men, the more:					
a. respect they have from Black women.	()	()	()	()	()
b. they marry outside of their race.	()	()	()	()	()
31. Selecting a mate is more important than spending time maintaining a relationship.	()	()	()	()	()
32. In selecting a mate it is important to investigate an individual's:					
(rate all below)					
a. religion.	()	()	()	()	()
b. up-bringing.	()	()	()	()	()
c. financial status.	()	()	()	()	()
d. value system.	()	()	()	()	()
33. Usually, Black women send:					
(rate all below)					
a. confusing messages to Black men.	()	()	()	()	()
b. conflicting messages to Black men.	()	()	()	()	()
34. A good way to improve Black male/female relationships is:					
a. a communications workshop.	()	()	()	()	()
b. couples therapy.	()	()	()	()	()
c. a video of the causes of conflict in Black male/female relationships.	()	()	()	()	()
35. Other ways to improve Black male/female relationships are:					

36. COMMENTS: Please use this section to expand on any of the above answers or feel free to make comments.					

APPENDIX B: Tables 1-10

Table 1. Participant's Gender

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Male	13	40.6
Female	19	59.4
No response	2	0
Total:	34	100.0

Table 2. Participant's Age Range

<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
21 - 30	2	5.9
31 - 40	11	32.4
41 - 50	15	44.0
51 - 60	6	7.7
Total:	34	100.0

Table 3. Participant's Marital Status

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Single	8	23.5
Married	12	35.3
Separated	2	5.9
Divorced	12	35.3
Total:	34	100.0

Table 4. Participant's Income Range

<u>Annual Income</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Under \$25,000	6	18.8
\$25,001 - \$40,000	12	37.5
\$40,001 - \$60,000	11	34.3
\$Over \$60,000	3	9.4
No response	2	0
Total:	34	100.0

Table 5. Participant's Education

<u>Education Level</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
High School/GED	4	11.8
Up to 2 yrs College	9	26.5
4 yrs of College	17	50.0
Masters Degree	3	8.8
Doctorate Degree	1	2.9
Total:	34	100.0

Table 6. Participant's Religion

<u>Religion</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Protestant	22	64.7
Catholic	1	2.9
Islamic	1	2.9
Other	8	23.5
No organized relig.	2	5.9
Total:	34	100.0

Table 7. Questions on Race

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Pre-test</u>				<u>Post-test</u>			
	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>
10(a)	29		3	2	28		6	
11(a)	16	2	16		15	5	14	
12(a)	15	3	15	1	27	1	6	
30(b)	22	8	4		25	4	5	

*(see questionnaire)

Table 8. Questions on Class/Economics

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Pre-test</u>				<u>Post-test</u>			
	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>
10(b)	26	3	4	1	25	1	5	3
11(b)	12	9	13		22	2	10	
12(b)	24	5	5		31	1	2	
13	10	4	19	1	18	1	15	
14	8	4	22		8	2	24	
15	19	3	12		16		16	
16	16	3	15		28	2	4	
17	19	4	11		27	1	6	
18	20	4	10		26		8	
19	5	5	24		11	1	20	2
22	7	3	24		9	3	22	
30(a)	13	3	16	2	20	1	13	

*(see questionnaire)

Table 9. Questions on Gender

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Pre-test</u>				<u>Post-test</u>			
	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>
10© 27	1	6		23	8	3		
11© 16	6	12		17	5	12		
20	24	1	9		26	3	5	
27	17	6	10	1	25	2	6	1

*(see questionnaire)

Table 10. Questions on Attitude

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Pre-test</u>				<u>Post-test</u>			
	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>
21	24	1	9		22	2	10	
25	13	5	16		23	2	9	
26	13	8	13		23	2	9	
28	17	5	12		13	3	18	
29	6	5	22	1	5	1	28	

*(see questionnaire)

Table 11. Questions on Interventions

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Pre-test</u>				<u>Post-test</u>			
	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>NR</u>
34(a)	28	3	3		31		3	
34(b)	27	4	3		11	1	2	
34(c)	19	6	9		27	2	5	

*(see questionnaire)

Conversion Scale

A= Agree
NS= Not Sure
D= Disagree
NR= No Response

APPENDIX C: Protection of Human Subjects

The purpose and intended use of this study will be fully disclosed to all participants, both verbally and in writing. The confidentiality of the human subjects for this study will be protected by assigning numerical codes to each survey. Each participant will be assured that the information provided will be kept confidential. All data provided will be used for statistical purposes only. All written information will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. The study will not contain any information which would allow a reader to identify any individual in the study. To ensure the protection of human subjects, this study will be reviewed and approved by an assigned research advisor and must pass the scrutiny of the social work department's Human Subjects Committee.

APPENDIX D: Informed Consent

The pupose of this survey is to examine the knowledge and attitudes of Black men and women in the area of conflict in Black male/female relationships. This study is being conducted by Debra C. Taylor and Marilyn R. McClain, graduate students in Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino. The study is being supervised by Dr. Ira Neighbors, Faculty Research Advisor at the university.

Please answer all of the questions to the best of your ability, based honestly on your own feelings. You will be given a pre-test to measure your knowledge and attitudes, an educational intervention will be administered, followed by a post-test. The results of both tests will be statistically compared, and an assessment will be made on the effectiveness of the intervention.

If for any reason you feel that you do not wish to continue in this process, please feel comfortable to indicate so, by returning the survey to the tester. Minimal to no psychological damage is anticipated as a result of participating in this survey.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY IS STRICTLY VOLUNTARY.

Please sign and date the informed consent below, indicating your willingness to participate in this survey.

Your name will in no way be used in reporting survey results, and your confidentiality will be protected by the strictest measures.

I acknowledge that I have been informed and understand the purpose and use of this study, and I freely consent to participate.

Participant's Name(Please Print)

Participant's signature

Date

APPENDIX E: Debriefing Statement

The study in which you have just participated, was to test your knowledge and attitudes in relation to conflict in Black male/female relationships. A one group design consisting of a pre-test and post-test was used to measure the impact of the educational intervention. The purpose of the intervention is to enlighten and provide insight to Black men and women about conflictual relationships, with the goal of promoting healthier Black male/female relationships.

The study was developed as a research project by Marilyn R. McClain and Debra C. Taylor, Master of Social Work students at California State University, San Bernardino. If you would like to be informed of the results of this study, you may arrange to come in and read the report by contacting the Social Work Department of the university at 909/880-5501. If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study, you may contact Ms. McClain, and/or Ms. Taylor at 909/880-5501. You may also contact the faculty advisor supervising this study, Dr. Ira Neighbors, at 909/880-5565.

Your time and participation in this study is very much appreciated.

Thank you,

Marilyn R. McClain
Debra C. Taylor

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